

# WWGA/Mountain States/UW Completes Another Successful Ram Sire Test

## *70 Rams Complete 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Test*

The Wyoming Wool Growers Association wrapped up its eleventh annual Ram Sire Test, held in cooperation with the University of Wyoming Department of Animal Science and the Mountain States Lamb Cooperative, in Laramie on Wednesday, August 31, 2011.

A total of 70 ram lambs born in 2011 from eight consignors successfully completed the 75-day Test and posted some of the best results in the history of the Test. The overall average rate of gain on this year's Test was .89 pounds per head per day, which was slightly down from the all time high mark of 1.04#/day set in 2005. The rams were fed a ration specially formulated by UW Animal Science nutritionists which is designed to grow the rams without putting on excessive fat and contains no corn. Consequently, lambs on the WWGA/MSLC/UW Test will sometimes not post high gains as compared to Tests which use corn-based diets, but unlike those tests, rams from the Wyoming test had much greater acceptance due to their overall health and vitality.

The Test measured several economically important traits including Average Daily Gain (ADG), Loin Eye Area (LEA) and Back Fat (BF) as measured by ultrasound. Rams were weighed at 25-day intervals during the Test and measured at the conclusion of the Test by ultrasound. In addition to all of the data collected as described, for only the second time possibly in the world, all of the rams passing through this year's Ram Sire Test will also have GrowSafe data, which describes the actual cost of gain for each animal (see separate article on GrowSafe)

A unique aspect of the WWGA/MSLC/UW Ram Sire Test is the use of an overall performance index, which combines the animal's genetic potential for muscling and its performance in the feedlot and includes the loin eye area per cwt multiplied by the average daily gain. Rams are initially sorted using a preliminary performance Index, with the top 50% then being visually appraised in order to determine the final order.

Using this criteria and procedure, the high overall performance indexing ram was a Suffolk ram from Collette Fenster of Kaycee. The very young buck lamb posted an overall performance index ratio of 126.95. This tremendous individual posted other scores which included: an ADG across the 75-days of the Test of 1.29 lbs/day (the highest of any ram on

the Test); Final Weight= 172.0 lbs, and had a loin eye area of 4.32 sq. inches, second largest of all the rams on the test.

The high indexing ram of Fenster's was closely followed by a ram lamb consigned by Allison Ramsbottom of Kaycee, WY. This large-framed, growthy Suffolk X Hampshire lamb posted a Final Index score 124.22, had a Test high LEA of 4.78 and had a ADG 1.05#'/day. An exceptional point about this tremendous individual was the fact that he was the only ram to receive the highest mark attainable of a 10 on the visual appraisal portion of the Test, and he received this score from all three judges.

One other notable accomplishment of this year's Test were the number of rams showing genetic resistance to the disease scrapie. When the WWGA/MSLC/UW Ram Sire Test was first begun, 50% of the rams carried none of the genes responsible for scrapie resistance (QQ), with less than 20% carrying both genes coding for resistance (RR). Within the past 11 years, a wholesale shift has occurred, with 78% of the rams on this year's Test testing as RR, 18% being QR and only 6% were QQ (no scrapie resistance). Selection and propagation of the genes responsible for resistance to scrapie has been of paramount importance to the U.S. sheep industry for more than 15 years now.

The top 21 rams from this year's Test are eligible to sell in the Wyoming State Ram Sale in Douglas on September 13, 2011. Sheep producers from across the country will have the opportunity to purchase these top rams at that sale with all of the performance information from the Test available for their review.

For more information or complete Test results, contact the WWGA's office at 307-265-5250, by email at [wyowool@wyowool.org](mailto:wyowool@wyowool.org), or Test results can be downloaded from the Association's website at [www.wyowool.org](http://www.wyowool.org).